

Wednesday after the 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity / 9<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost, 2019 A.✠ D.

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

St. Paul writes of God's love and of God's wrath. The Apostle writes that you understand that by God's love toward us, Christ died for us. And by Christ's death and resurrection, we are saved from wrath through Him. God is a God of love. His is the Fount and Source of all Love. The work proper to His Divine Nature is to create and to bless and to heal and to save, to provide and to protect.

Consider how He blessed His chosen people Israel, choosing them through no merit of their own, repeatedly delivering them from danger even as they wandered and strayed, and giving them the Promised Land. God is a God of love. His love, His mercy, He shows to us, to His Holy Church, the True Israel. That Truth, Love Incarnate, is the heart and center of our faith.

God is also Just. He is the source of all true justice. God is Holy. He is the source of all true holiness. And because God is True, although it is His alien work, God is wrathful. "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God", He proclaims. He is jealous in a way that fallen men cannot understand, a holy, sinless jealousy. He is jealous for your soul. In love, He desires you to be His, and His alone.

So He is wrathful towards ungodliness. He is wrathful towards sin. The wrath of God is horrible. One cannot hide from it. One cannot avoid it. All the sinner can do is to suffer it, and that eternally. What God desires is that all men be saved. But there is wrath for those who will not believe. Wrath is what sin has earned. Our God is a jealous God, a consuming fire.

Fallen men mistake this blessed season of God's grace for a sign that there will be no day of judgment. Sinful men mistake God's longsuffering and mercy for weakness. So men carry on in their sins, their gluttony, their lust, their arrogance and pride, their hard-heartedness and selfishness. And inasmuch as you still have your flesh, inasmuch as you daily wrestle with the sinful tugs of the fallen flesh, every man must confess that he too has sinned, that you too have sinned.

And by that sin, what all sinful men have earned, what you have earned, is the wrath of God of which the Apostle teaches. So does the Lord Himself say "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off." "If your foot causes you to sin, cut it off." "If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out."

It is not hyperbole. God's wrath is horrible. Just as God commanded Israel to put to death every man, woman and child in the promised land, a horrible command, so it is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, two feet, or two eyes and entering hell, where "their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched."

But if you were to begin cutting off and plucking out every part of you used to sin, you would soon be left with no body at all. And still you would not be clean, still you would not be without sin, for sin comes not from hand nor foot nor eye. Sin comes from the fallen heart. And to pluck out the heart is to die.

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But thanks be to God, that God demonstrates His love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. He suffered His sinless heart to be pierced. The sinless flesh of His hands and feet and brow was pierced. His eyes were darkened. He became for us a worm and no man, the lowest of all. He stood before the Father bearing your sin. The full wrath of God was poured out on Him. But in love His Blood was poured out for you.

So you are saved from the wrath through Him. You are reconciled to God through the death of His Son. You are justified by His Blood. And much more, having been reconciled, you are saved by His life, which having willingly laid down, He miraculously took up again.

Like Israel, God chose you with no merit or worth on your part, simply by His grace, simply because He loves you. He has repeatedly delivered you from danger. And He has reserved for you a heavenly Promised Land.

That heaven meets earth at the Baptismal font, where your sins are removed, and Paradise is made yours. You taste of that Paradise this day when you hear His Word. For that which is holy and just pierces the sinful world and brings life and salvation, feeding faith.

And that heaven comes to you as you taste of that Paradise, when you receive the Holy Eucharist, as the Lord who died for you brings His forgiveness and life to your lips and tongue and into your soul.

So rejoice with the Apostle. Thanks be to God, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. His free gift to you cost Him His life. But given His life, given eternal life, we do not fear. We rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

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